



Help for CA families Seeking ABA

What you need to know about accessing
ABA in California

A CASP and CalABA Collaboration





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What is ABA?

ABA is a well-developed scientific discipline focusing on the analysis, design, implementation, and evaluation of social and other environmental modifications to produce meaningful changes in human behavior.

ABA uses changes in environmental events, including antecedent stimuli and consequences, to produce practical and significant changes in behavior.

Facts About ABA for Families



Q My physician is recommending a therapy called Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). What does ABA look like for people with autism?

A ABA is often prescribed for people with autism and can be provided in schools, homes, clinics, and community settings. ABA is based on the science of behavior. It is individualized based on the autistic person's strengths and the challenges they experience.

ABA providers are called Behavior Analysts. Like other medical and behavioral health providers, Behavior Analysts rely upon strategies and procedures from peer-reviewed research. They continually evaluate and customize treatment options based on the needs of the autistic person.

Behavior Analysts request and integrate information from the autistic person and their caregivers and coordinate care with other professionals who serve the autistic person.

The oldest and largest national certification board in ABA is the Behavior Analyst Certification Board® (BACB®). BACB certification can help health plans, and subscribers identify qualified ABA providers.

Q Does ABA acknowledge the differences that make a person with autism unique?

A Yes. ABA providers work with the person with autism and their circle of support to learn what is important to them over different points in time.

For example,

- for a toddler, this may be learning to speak or point;
- for a tween, this could be learning how to safely walk in a parking lot or take turns playing video games with peers;
- for a teenager, this could be learning how to navigate social media or practicing healthful hygiene.

ABA providers celebrate each autistic person's unique identity and personality and incorporate personal preferences throughout treatment.

Q Is the goal of ABA to make a person normal?

A No. Safety, dignity, and personal preference are essential components of any ABA program. ABA providers work directly with people with autism to choose meaningful goals. For example, ABA therapists implement programs that can help create awareness of existing societal expectations so that they can make informed choices.

Q Do ABA providers allow clients to make choices?

A Yes. Choice is an essential part of an ABA program. Providers incorporate choice throughout the treatment process. This begins at intake when autistic people and caregivers work with providers to set goals that are important to them. The incorporation of choice is continually evaluated throughout treatment.

Q How does ABA align with neurodiversity?

A ABA providers teach evidence-based communication skills to people with autism, so they can express their wants and needs, strengthening their ability to advocate and participate in ongoing treatment decisions and person-centered planning. ABA therapy focuses on empowering people with autism to navigate their world and live connected and healthy lives.

Q Does the ABA profession accept the exploitation of people with autism?

A No. All recipients of ABA services have a right to receive effective treatment that is free from exploitation. ABA providers who exploit or attempt to use their power to take advantage of autistic people should be reported to the appropriate legal or regulatory authorities.

Q Has ABA changed over time?

A Yes. All science-based health care professions are constantly evolving. ABA is just over a half-century old and its evolving research findings have increasingly allowed providers to provide more personalized and effective services.

Q Do behavior analysts consider the reasons why a behavior might be happening?

A Yes. ABA providers very deliberately consider why clients behave the way they do. An entire methodology known as functional behavior assessment is designed around this basic idea. These reasons are expected to be incorporated into treatment to ensure needs, wants, and preferences are being met.



Although historically, person-first language has been preferred by the broader disability community, people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, their families, and providers have expressed dramatically different preferences. Because of this, we use both person-first and identity-first language in this Q&A.

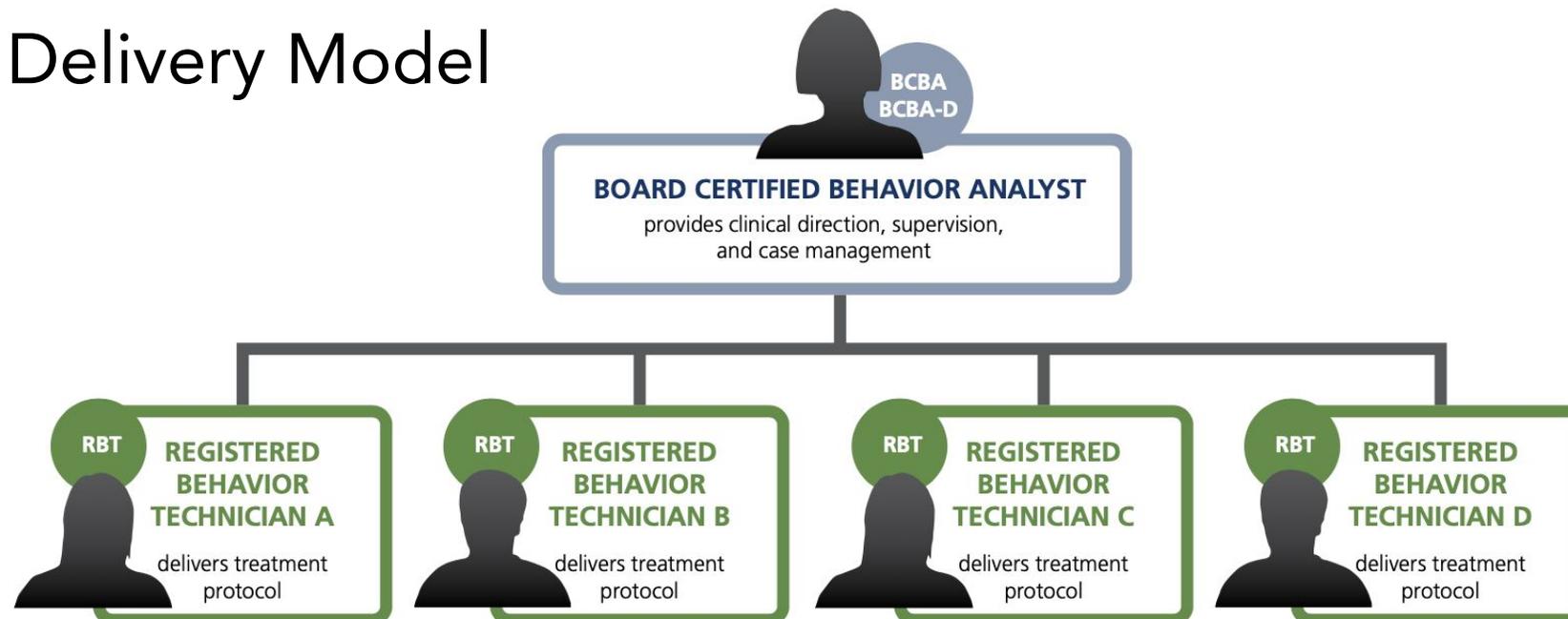
For reference information, please contact info@casproviders.org.



What is ABA?

Usually provided by a team including Board Certified Behavior Analysts[®] (BCBAs) and Registered Behavior Technicians[®] (RBTs)

Tiered Delivery Model



What is ABA?

- Effective across the lifespan for a variety of disorders and conditions including ASD
- Documented in hundreds of peer-reviewed studies over past 50 years
- Standard of care for the treatment of ASD
- Widely recognized by many national authorities
- Tailored to the specific needs of the person and designed in collaboration with them and their caregivers

What is ABA?

- For more information visit <https://www.casproviders.org/>
- CASP Website → Resources → Standards → ASD Practice Guidelines



Applied Behavior Analysis Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorder:

Practice Guidelines for Healthcare Funders and Managers

Why is access to ABA important?

- Access to ABA early can lead to improved outcomes for young children with autism
- Individuals with ASD often require intervention to learn critical skills and reduce challenging behavior
- Some may require ABA services throughout their lifespan
- Access to care is the law



Access to ABA in 2023

- ABA is covered by commercial insurance and Medi-Cal
- Families are currently facing long delays in access
 - Insufficient rates
 - Burdensome provider requirements from health plans
 - Workforce/staffing issues

Access to ABA in 2023

- For those who can access ABA, these issues are leading to individuals often not receiving all recommended hours
- Health plans may be creating barriers to access
- Health plans have to have an adequate provider network and ensure timely access to care

What Can You Do?

1. File a complaint with your health plan

- This may lead to your health plan assisting you with accessing ABA services
- Health plans are required by law to have a process to resolve enrollee complaints within 30 days
- You are required to file a complaint with your health plan before contacting state regulators

What Can You Do?

2. Contact State Regulators

- State regulators need to hear from patients experiencing this issue in order to address it with the health plans
- Health plans need to have adequate networks to serve their members

Families Covered by Medi-Cal

- Contact the Medi-Cal Ombudsperson
- Phone: (888) 452-8609
- Email MMCDOmbudsmanOffice@dhcs.ca.gov
- <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/medi-cal/Pages/MMCDOfficeoftheOmbudsman.aspx>

What Can You Do?

Department of Managed Health Care

- DMHC oversees the majority of health plans in CA
- Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs)
- <https://www.dmhc.ca.gov/FileaComplaint.aspx>

What Can You Do?

CA Department of Insurance

- (800) 927-4357
- <https://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/101-help/upload/RFAhealth.pdf>
- <https://www.insurance.ca.gov/01-consumers/101-help/index.cfm>

State Legislators

Contact your State Legislators

- Senator and Assemblymember
- Share your story
- Ask them to address this issue through legislation

<https://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov/>

Find Your California Representative

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Address : **26245 Prima Way, Santa Clarita, California, 91350**

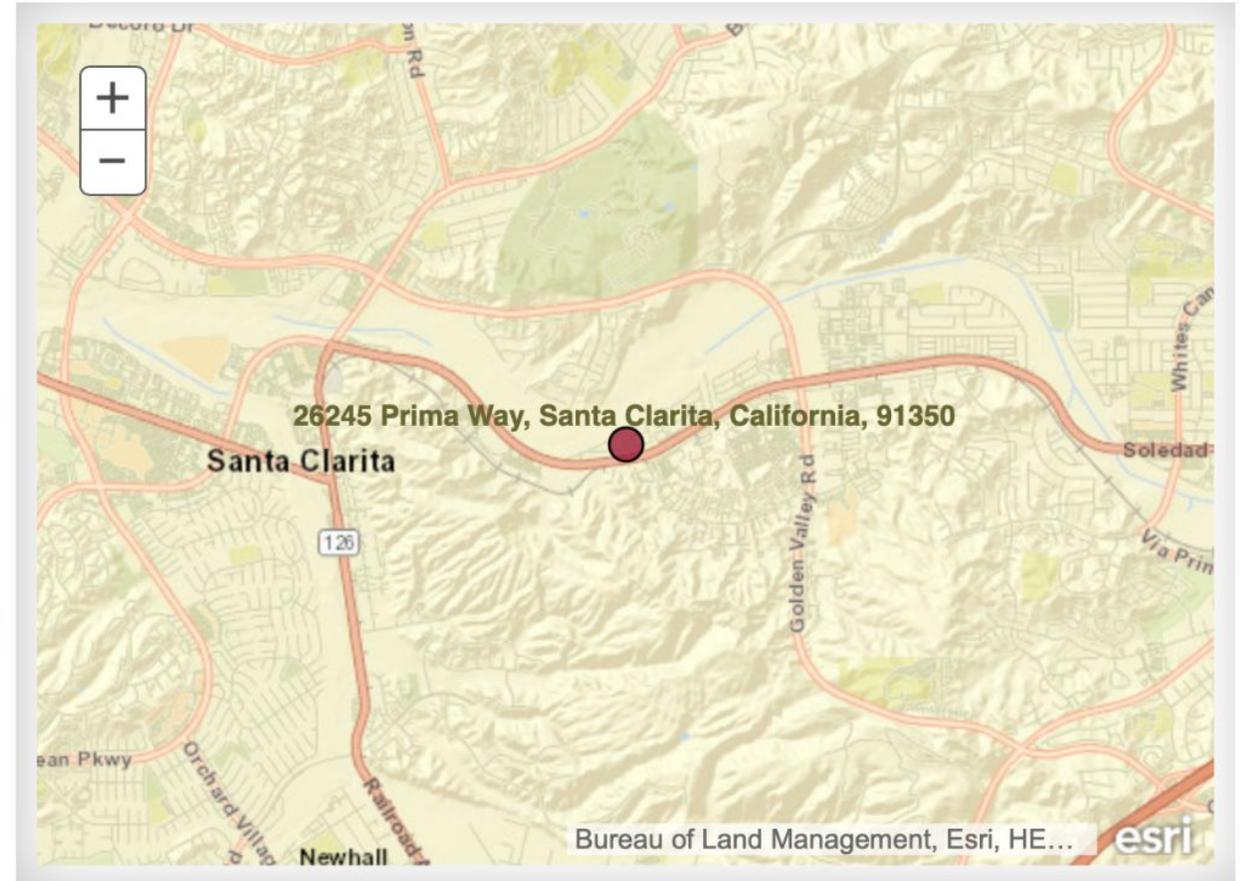
State Assembly (District 40)

Assemblymember [Pilar Schiavo-DEM](#)

State Senate (District 21)

Senator [Scott Wilk-REP](#)

Search Again



Thank you for attending!

More Information

<https://www.casproviders.org/california>

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